

## **Tuition will rise this fall at all four Owensboro colleges**

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Published: Saturday, June 19, 2010 12:44 AM CDT

Students at any one of Owensboro's four colleges and universities will see their tuition costs go up this fall, but the institutions are still trying out new ways to keep higher education affordable, according to administrators.

Tuition will increase at Owensboro Community and Technical College and Western Kentucky University-Owensboro by 4 percent in the coming year. Those institutions, which are partially state-funded, are raising their rates because of cuts in funding at the state level.

Brescia University and Kentucky Wesleyan College, private institutions that aren't funded by the state, also have tuition increases in place for students in the fall. Brescia's full-time yearly tuition will increase by 8.7 percent to \$16,950, while KWC's will increase by 6.5 percent to \$17,980.

Increases at these institutions are largely because of economic factors, administrators said.

"Of course, the cost of doing business continues to rise. As it does, we try to keep our tuition increases to a minimum while we maintain the high quality education we provide," said Kathy Rutherman, a spokeswoman for KWC.

The Rev. Larry Hostetter, president of Brescia, said tuition increases at private institutions are necessary to guarantee that students and employees are well-cared for.

"We're always looking to provide better services for our students, making sure we're employing best practices, recruiting the best faculty we can. That's usually what goes into it," Hostetter said. "We try to keep any increases down as much as we can."

To assist students and attempt to keep education affordable, Hostetter said, the administration made a compromise of sorts. Students returning to Brescia will have their room-and-board costs frozen at the previous year's rate.

Rutherman said KWC students are encouraged to take advantage of counseling with the financial aid staff, who have historically been successful at assisting students in finding all available aid.

"There are so many options out there for them, and our financial aid counselors are well-trained to help them find what options work for them," Rutherman said.

State-funded institutions' tuition increases are limited by yearly cap instituted by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, which set the amount this year at 4 percent.

The tuition increase of 4 percent is systemwide for all of OCTC's parent organization, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, which equates to an increase of \$5 per credit hour to \$130.

WKU-Owensboro's 4 percent increase, likewise, is in effect at the main campus and all satellite campuses such as Owensboro's, bringing students' credit-hour cost up \$12 to \$312.

"It does provide some assistance to the budget because the General Assembly did cut state funding by close to 1.5 percent. This helps to cover a part of that cost," said Dr. Larry Durrence, interim president at OCTC.

The KCTCS Board of Regents also voted that any student who attended a KCTCS school in either the fall of 2009 or spring of 2010 would not be affected by these increases.

"The board decided to do something rather unusual," Durrence said. "They would be guaranteed the same tuition rate, even if there is another tuition increase. The board is hopeful this will encourage people to stay in school and complete degrees."

At the same time, Durrence said, faculty and staff members will see no raises this year because of the funding issues. A one-time lump sum payment will be made, however, to try and offset that problem, Durrence said.

"That at least helps deal with some of the cost-of-living increases and expenses this year," Durrence said. "We're dealing with declining state funding, and it's really not a good situation."

Gene Tice, director of WKU-Owensboro, said a \$1,000 increase in salaries for all faculty and staff members is being considered but has not been finalized.

"The increase will reflect the fact that we did not get an increase in state funding to try to offset the increase in all the expenses we have to pay, such as health insurance, and operating costs of all the particular campuses," Tice said.

Tice said sometimes there is no other option except to raise the cost of education, and he said the most unfortunate part of that is how it affects the students.

"Any increase in tuition will be a challenge for our students on the main campus or on the regional campuses," Tice said. "It's a reflection of how expenses increase, and we've got to balance our budget."